

### Testimony in Support of S.B 284

Dear Chairs Abercrombie and Moore, Vice Chairs Lesser and Leeper, Ranking Members Berthel and Case, and Members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Dylan Council and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for **S.B. 284 - An Act Increasing the Age from Eight to Eighteen Years for an Income-Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless of Immigration Status**. This bill would provide state-funded medical assistance to any child or young adult under the age of eighteen years of age, regardless of immigration status, whose household income does not exceed two hundred one percent of the federal poverty level, and who does not otherwise qualify for Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance 11 Program, or employer-sponsored insurance.

Connecticut's expansion of HUSKY last year to children ages 0-8 years was an important win for immigrants in the state, who have been predominantly challenged by the shortage of healthcare resources. The passage of S.B 284 would expand this win by guaranteeing more access to programs like HUSKY that largely benefit low-income immigrant families and individuals. Undocumented immigrants without coverage must rely on health care safety net resources, such as public hospitals or community clinics, to access needed medical care. Despite serving as important access points, none of these resources is equivalent to having comprehensive health insurance coverage.

Currently, there are large disparities in who has access to care in the state. While the uninsured rate in Connecticut is roughly 5.9%, an estimated 52% of undocumented immigrants in our state are uninsured, or over 53,000 people. Further, Data reported by the Migrant Policy Institute (MPI) estimates 30.1% of foreign-born, non-citizens in Connecticut have no health care coverage, an estimated 159,600 individuals. Connecticut must recognize this staggering gap in equity if it hopes to lower the state's overall uninsured rate, especially during a pandemic that is impacting immigrants disproportionately. Clearly, action needs to be taken.

Furthermore, Connecticut's HUSKY Health Programs restricts applicants eligibility based on immigration status. Currently, undocumented individuals (those who are not US citizens or greencard holders) and those who have held a greencard for less than 5 years are unable to qualify for HUSKY. For people at lower income levels, HUSKY is the best option because it removes the barrier of deductibles and copays. As such, expanding HUSKY for immigrants regardless of status would benefit low-income families and individuals who would otherwise not be able to purchase coverage.

Currently, Connecticut lags behind other states in this area. Six states (CA, IL, MA, NY, OR, and WA) and DC use state-only funds to cover income-eligible children regardless of immigration status. In June 2019, California approved an expansion in coverage for income-eligible young undocumented immigrant adults through age 25. Failing to pass this legislation would mean Connecticut is failing to keep up when it comes to upholding the right of all to have access to healthcare.

I urge you to expand healthcare to the immigrant population because it would allow them to receive the preventative treatment they deserve, reduce the uninsured rate in Connecticut, and save the state money by decreasing uncompensated care costs. Connecticut can and should do better in promoting healthcare as a human right, rather than a commodity that only the wealthy can afford. I urge you to favorably vote this bill out of the Human Services Committee so that more immigrants in the state are able to access and afford health care that they're in desperate need of. Thank you for your time and consideration,

Dylan Council  
New Haven, CT